

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 NEA-11 IO-14 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03

SAM-01 SS-20 RSC-01 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DRC-01

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R 131720Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBZSSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4492

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 862

DEPARTMENT PASS CAIRO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, LY

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN UNION: PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA

REVIEWS DEVELOPMENTS OVER PAST FOUR WEEKS

1. SUMMARY: IN ONE-HOUR MEETING WITH ME FEB 13 PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA REVIEWED EVENTS SINCE DJERBA DECLARATION PROCLAIMING TUNISIAN-LIBYAN UNION. PRIME MINISTER HAD LITTLE NEW TO REPORT, BUT HE CONFIRMED A NUMBER OF DEVELOPMENTS WHICH WE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED. PRIME MINISTER CONCLUDED THAT EVENTS PAST SEVERAL WEEKS CONFIRMED HIS VIEW THAT QADHAFI IS DANGEROUS MAN. WHILE HE RECOGNIZES THAT QADHAFI COULD MAKE TROUBLE FOR TUNISIA, PRIME MINISTER IS CONFIDENT OF SUPPORT OF TUNISIAN PUBLIC AND OF MILITARY. IT IS CLEAR THAT IN HIS OWN QUIET WAY PRIME MINISTER HAS TAKEN CHARGE AND THAT AS FAR AS HE IS CONCERNED UNION WITH QADHAFI-LED LIBYA IS OUT OF THE QUESTION. END SUMMARY.

2. IN ONE-HOUR MEETING FEB 13. HELD AT PRIME MINISTER'S

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INITIATIVE, NOUIRA CAREFULLY REVIEWED DEVELOPMENTS OVER

PAST FOUR WEEKS IN CONNECTION WITH PROJECTED TUNISIAN-LIBYAN UNION.

3. DJERBA DECLARATION. PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT HE WAS PUZZLED WHILE IN PARIS ON JANUARY 12 TO HEAR FROM TUNISIAN EMBASSY THAT TUNIS RADIO WAS ANNOUNCING TO LISTENERS THAT IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT WAS TO BE EXPECTED LATER IN DAY. HE WAS ASTONISHED WHEN HE LEARNED WHAT ANNOUNCEMENT WAS ALL ABOUT. HE TOLD ME THAT WHEN HE HAD LEFT FOR IRAN A WEEK OR SO BEFORE, THERE HAD BEEN NO INDICATION WHATSOEVER THAT UNION WITH LIBYA WAS IN THE OFFING. FIRST THOUGHT THAT CAME TO HIS MIND, HE CONTINUED, WAS THAT NONE OF THE PRESIDENT'S CLOSE ADVISORS WERE WITH HIM AT THE TIME. (IN THIS CONNECTION HE MENTIONED HIMSELF, PRESIDENT'S WIFE, WASSILA, BOURGUIBA JR., AND "TWO OTHERS".) HE WAS CONVINCED THAT MASMOUDI HAD STAGE-MANAGED TIMEING OF QADHAFI'S VISIT TO DJERBA TO OCCUR DURING ABSENCE OF FOREGOING ADVISORS.

4. PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA. NOUIRA SAID THAT UPON HIS RETURN TO TUNIS SATURDAY NIGHT, JANUARY 12, HE ARRANGED TO SEE PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA FOLLOWING MORNING AT 9AM. AT MEETING NOUIRA HAD CALLED PRESIDENT'S ATTENTION TO FACT THAT ANY TUNISIAN-LIBYAN UNION WOULD HAVE TO CONFIRM WITH TUNISIA'S CONSTITUTION WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, HAD NO PROVISION FOR REFERENDUM. HE URGED PRESIDENT TO MOVE TOWARD UNION GRADUALLY, AND TO CONSIDER DJERBA DECLARATION NOTHING MORE THAN STATEMENT IN PRINCIPLE. PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT ON HIS RETURN TO TUNIS ON EVENING OF JANUARY 12 HE HAD ALREADY PUSHED BACK PROPOSED DATE FOR REFERENDUM. NOUIRA SAID THAT WAS NOT ENOUGH. ONE IMPORTANT FIRST STEP WAS TO GET RID OF MASMOUDI AS MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS. NOUIRA SAID HE TOLD PRESIDENT THAT HE WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION IF MASMOUDI WERE GIVEN ANOTHER MINISTRY, BUT THAT HE MUST NOT CONTINUE AS FOREIGN MINISTER. PRESIDENT STATED THAT HE HAD LONG TALKED ABOUT REMOVING MASMOUDI FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY POSITION AND PROPOSED OFFERING HIM THE

JOB OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN THE PALACE. NOUIRA AGREED. PRESIDENT LATER CALLED MASMOUDI, BUT LATTER TURNED DOWN THE NEW JOB OFFER.

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5. ALGERIA'S OBJECTIONS. NOUIRA SAID THAT HE EMPHASIZED TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA IMPORTANT OF HAVING ALGERIA'S SUPPORT IN ANY MOVE TOWARD UNION. HE COMMENTED TO PRESIDENT THAT WHILE TUNISIA COULD, IF IT WISHED, FOLLOW POLICIES WHICH MIGHT NOT ALWAYS PLEASE ITS "FRIENDS", IT COULD NOT AFFORD TO FOLLOW POLICIES WHICH ANTAGONIZED AN IMPORTANT NEIGHBOR. TO GO AHEAD WITH UNION IN FACE OF ALGERIA'S OPPOSITION WOULD

BE FOOLHARDY. NOUIRA SAID THAT PRESIDENT LISTENED, BUT AT

THAT POINT MADE NO UNDERTAKING TO BACK OFF DJERBA
DECLARATION.

6. CRUCIAL EVENTS OF MONDAY. NOUIRA SAID THAT BY TIME
HE SAW PRESIDENT AGAIN MONDAY MORNING, PRESIDENT HAD COME
AROUND TO HIS (NOUIRA'S) VIEWPOINT. (PRIME MINISTER COMMENTED
IN PASSING THAT HE HAD SEEN PRESIDENT JUST AFTER PRESIDENT
HAD SEEN ME. HE TOOK CREDIT FOR HAVING PROPOSED TO PRESIDENT
THAT HE MEET WITH FFENCH AMBASSADOR AND ME RESPECTIVELY
THAT MORNING.) PRESIDENT ACCEPTED PRIME MINISTER'S PROPOSAL
THAT IMPORTANT MEETING OF CABINET AND PARTY OFFICIALS BE
CALLED FOR FOLLOWING DAY FOR PURPOSE OF ENDORSING COMMUNIQUE
EXPLAINING GOT'S GRADUALISTIC APPROACH TOWARD UNION (I.E.
FIRST OFFICIAL STATEMENT INDICATING A BACKING-OFF FROM
MERGE UNDERTAKING). PRIME MINISTER SAID HE DRAFTED PROPOSED
COMMUNIQUE AND BOURGUIBA APPROVED IT VERBATIM. SO DID
ASSEMBLED CABINET MEMBERS AND PARTY LEADERS AFTER SOME DISCUSSION.
(TUNIS 224).

7. QADHAFI'S END-RUN TO GENEVA. PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS
AGAIN CAUGHT BY SURPRISE WHEN HE LEARNED THAT QADHAFI WAS
AIRBOURNE FOR SWITZERLAND ON JANAIKY 25. HE IMMEDIATELY SENSED
WHAT QADHAFI WAS UP TO, CALLED TOGETHER KEY OFFICIALS AND
TOOK OFF AFTER HIM. HE SAID WHEN HE MET QADHAFI BEFORE THEY
SAW PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA, QADHAFI LAMELY SAID TO HIM. "I
CAME AT THIS POINT BECAUSE I KNEW YOU WERE ALREADY HERE WITH
THE PRESIDENT". NOUIRA SAID HE REPLIED, "I CAME BACK
EXPRESSLY TO RECEIVE YOU". NOUIRA COMMENTED WRYLY THAT
QADHAFI WAS OBVIOUSLY UNHAPPY TO SEE HIM. HE SAID AT MEETING

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED CAIRO.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 862

DEPARTMENT PASS CAIRO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, LY

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN UNION: PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA

REVIEWS DEVELOPMENTS OVER PAST FOUR WEEKS

WITH BOURGUIBA, QADHAFI PRESSED HARD FOR "DATES"

-- BOTH REFERENDUM DATE AS WELL AS DATE FOR

CONSUMMATION OF UNION. NOUIRA SAID HE STOOD FIRM,

CONTENDING THAT HE COULD NOT TIE TUNISIA DOWN TO
ANY DATES AND, INDEED, COULD NOT EVEN ASSURE THAT
UNION WOULD TAKE PLACE. "WHAT," HE ASKED QADHAFI,
"IF OUR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REFUSES TO APPROVE OF THE
PRINCIPLE OF UNION? WE HAVE TO PROCEED BY
CONSTITUTIONAL MEANS."

8. OTHER ATTEMPTED QADHAFI END -RUNS. PRIME MINISTER
SAID THAT QADHAFI HAD EARLIER SOUGHT TO REACH PRESIDENT'S
WIFE, WASSILA BOURGUIBA, WHO WAS VISITING LEBANON. HE
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HAD SENT REPRESENTATIVE TO "KNOCK ON HER DOOR AT 11 PM,
1 AM AND 4 AM, " IN EFFORT TO PERSUADE HER TO GET PRESIDENT
BOURGUIBA BACK ON UNION TRACK. NOUIRA CHARACTERIZED THIS
ACTION AS REPREHENSIBLE. THEN, HE CONTINUED, AFTER
MEETING WITH BOURGUIBA AT GSTAAD QADHAFI HAD TAKEN TUNISIAN

MINISTERS MZALI AND MOALLA ASIDE IN EFFORT TO WORK ON THEM.
HE ASKED MZALI WHETHER HE WAS NOT UNHAPPY AT HAVING
BEEN REMOVED FROM HIS POSITION AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION

AND WHETHER THIS DID NOT REFLECT TUNISIAN GOVT'S UNHAPPINESS WITH HIS "ARABISM." MZALI EVIDENTLY SAID THAT THIS MOVE WAS PERFECTLY NORMAL AND THAT HE CONTINUED TO BE HELD IN HIGH REGARD IN GOT CIRCLES. MOALLA ALLEGEDLY ALSO TURNED ASIDE QADAFI'S EFFORTS.

9. MASMOUDI ANTICS. NOUIRA SAID HE KNEW THAT MASMOUDI HAD SPENT THREE DAYS IN LIBYA LAST WEEK AND HAD THEN GONE TO GSTAAD TO VISIT BOURGUIBA. MASMOUDI HAD SOUGHT TO ARGUE BOURGUIBA OUT OF BACKING AWAY FROM UNION WITH LIBYA BUT, ACCORDING TO NOUIRA, MASMOUDI GOT NOWHERE. HE SAID BOURGUIBA KEPT TELLING MASMOUDI, "YOU WILL ALWAYS BE LIKE MY SON." BUT THAT WAS ALL. WHEN NOUIRA SAW BOURGUIBA FOLLOWING DAY, AFTER NOUIRA'S

VISIT WITH BOUMEDIENE IN ANNABA, HE ASKED PRESIDENT HOW A MAN LIKE MASMOUDI COULD CONTINUE TO BE ALLOWED TO SERVE "AT THE HEART OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP." HE SAID THAT BOURGUIBA HAD IMMEDIATELY WRITTEN OUT THE ORDER EXPELLING MASMOUDI FROM THE PARTY AND TRANSMITTED IT TO TUNIS (TUNIS 804).

10. CONCLUSION: PRIME MINISTER CONCLUDED THAT EVENTS OF PAST SEVERAL WEEKS HAD ONLY SERVED TO CONFIRM HIS VIEW THAT QADHAFI IS A DANGEROUS MAN. HE RECOGNIZED THAT QADHAFI COULD CAUSE TROUBLE FOR TUNISIA IN WAY OF ATTEMPTED SUBVERSION, BUT HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF TUNISIAN PUBLIC AND, IN PARTICULAR, OF MILITARY. RECENT OPEN DEBATE ON UNION AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REFLECTED GENERAL ENDORSEMENT FOR HIS POLICY OF APPROACHING UNION WITH CONSIDERABLE CAUTION. HE SAID QADHAFI'S RECENT SPEECH OF FEB 10 IN WHICH HE

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ATTACKED TUNISIA HAS SOLIDIFIED POPULAR SUPPORT FOR CURRENT GOVERNMENT POLICY.

11. COMMENT: IT IS OBVIOUS THAT IN HIS OWN QUIET WAY PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA HAS TAKEN CHARGE. HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN EFFECTIVELY TORPEDOING PROPOSAL FOR MERGER WITH LIBYA, AND APPEARS IN THE PROCESS TO HAVE SUPPORT OF ALL KEY ELEMENTS OF POPULATION. AS LONG AS QADHAFI IS PRESIDENT OF LIBYA AND AT SAME TIME NOUIRA IS PRIME MINISTER IN TUNISIA, TUNISIAN-LIBYAN UNION IS VIRTUALLY OUT OF THE QUESTION.

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NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED CAIRO.

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